

Praise for *Jess C Scott*

“[Please] keep up the good work . . . the world can certainly use some more authentic, original work like yours, rather than the same old re-packaged mass-market pulp.”

— *TGirl Revelations / Bibrary.com, October 2010*

“Ever since I came across Jess C Scott’s teenage blog novel, *EyeLeash*, I’ve known that some very talented writers will emerge from the epublishing revolution.”

— *Joseph Grinton / October 2011*

SKINS

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www.jesscscott.com

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Summary: A 5000-word mini collection for animal lovers by author/artist/non-conformist, Jess C Scott. She will work at developing more stories with the subject of “animal rights” in mind.

Note: “Savior” also appears in Jess C Scott’s *Porcelain*.

#

Author’s Note:

I was recently inspired to write a short story on animal rights, due to a particularly grotesque photo of crocodile-skinned chairs in the November 2011 USA edition of *Harper’s Bazaar* (the photo is included in the last story, “Skins”).

Killing animals to make a fashion statement = a sickening + cold-blooded vanity.

-- Jess C Scott / jessINK

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FLASH FICTION

Savion

This story is for animal lovers.

* * * * *

The red deer stopped uphill on the forest path.

A robin flittered onto a birch tree in front. The stag raised his head, twitched both ears, then stamped his left hoof twice into the sodden, earthen track.

Savion always did that when he was running out of patience. He needed to tune in to the environment better, and he didn't have a moment to lose. It started with the hare he saw that morning. It was almost full-grown, and looked like any other that Savion had come upon—except that it had an injury. There had been a nasty gash on its hind foot, from getting tangled in a scrap of barbed wire. And it was hunting season.

He had seen a hunt once, with the beagles and basset hounds out on full pursuit. It had been a crisp foggy September morning. He had seen the huntsmen coming in their vans and cars, gathering the beagles around them. It was terrible. The calls of the hunting horn were like a resounding death knell over the land. All the animals knew it, but the hares especially so. Savion had never seen them darting bounding and dodging as swiftly as they did then. Keeping up with this hare hadn't been easy. It must be mayhem being chased by packs trained to find the scent line on all sides. The hare wouldn't know what happened, if the dogs did get to it and decided to snuff it.

Savion knew it was dangerous to come. What if a huntsman spotted *him*? What if he ended up being shot at, skinned, gutted, brought home to be roasted on a spit over a fireplace? Set on a table and served as dinner? He knew how roasted venison smelt like—he shuddered just thinking about it. But he couldn't just stay where he was and let this hunt go on either, in a place that he knew well and spent a lot of his time at. He didn't really know *how* he could help, or what he

would have to do if he needed to escape and save his life—but he was young, strong, and could gallop at top speed. He would rely on that.

Where are you, Savion thought.

He moved along the forest trail. There was the slightest rustle in the bushes ahead of him. Savion waited. He wanted to be sure that danger wasn't about to get him. From what he'd seen, he didn't trust humans very much. He didn't want to fall into a trap. He brought his head down and scanned the leaves and undergrowth.

Focus...focus...

He looked harder. And he saw it!—he could just about make out the hare hiding in the shadows. Savion saw her round gleaming eyes first, then the long ears, folded and flattened against the back of her neck. She was tensed up and cowering into the ground. Her fur coat was matted with dirt mud and bits of dry grass. Fear filled her wide eyes to the outer rim.

“Hello,” Savion spoke in a soft tone. It would have sounded like a subdued, ordinary and not-too-polite grunt, only to a human.

The hare was still breathing fast from the rapid running, but Savion could see her losing a little of the terror in her eyes, with him at least.

The smell of blood reached him. He remembered the wound on the hare's hind foot.

“Are you...all right?”

The hare still had not taken her gaze off Savion, not even once. She gave a short nod of her head, as if any more movement would cause the hounds and hunters to spring up from all round.

It was quiet; the air was so still. There was a distant firing of a gunshot. The deer and hare couldn't tell whether or not the shot had met its target. They didn't want to know.

Savion was starting to worry.

“Can you move?”

He didn't know what to ask, or what else he could do.

The hare twitched her nose and whiskers.

“A little,” she said in a shy voice.

Savion could not help but feel a sudden pang then, of a cold cruel sadness. It seemed to him as if he'd thought he could have changed the world with his presence.

He remembered a friend of his, a black stallion that lived on a farm on one of the fields open to the hunt. The steed had guffawed and asked him what on earth he thought he could do for the hares during hunting season. "I don't know," Savion had answered. He just found the idea of being hunted horrifying. He made sure to steer from his usual location when it was time for deer hunting. The hunters had not come around the year before though. Could things be changing? Perhaps. It was never the time to give all hope up.

He thought about why he was there...

He had wanted to do all he could today. But he wondered again why he had come. He had spent the last two hours following this hare, and what of it now? What of the remaining days and hares throughout the hunt?

"Is there anything I can do?"

The hare looked down the forest trail, to the dry withered field beyond which she had crossed, dragging sore foot and all.

"I'd ask you to just stay here," she said. A shiver ran through her, once. "But they're coming."

Savion brought his head to the direction—he hadn't been on the alert again. They were indeed coming. He hadn't been paying attention as he was thinking through his reasons for being there. He had an idea.

"Up ahead," he said to the hare, "is a stream. Go through it, the hounds will lose your scent."

He hoped that she would be able to make the distance. It wasn't very far ahead. He was backing up, hoping he wouldn't be seen. Not yet. He had a hunch that what he wanted to do would work.

"I'll go down there, now. You make your way to the stream and I will meet you there, later."

"Don't..." the hare said. "Please..." But her instinct was getting her ready to leave her spot.

Savion reared his head up with pride. He could feel the weight of the antlers on his head. They gave him a regality he hadn't known as a fawn. He had to go now; it would be any time before the dogs picked out the hare's scent in the forest.

Savion headed down the forest path, back where he had come from. He'd distract the hounds. He gained more sureness and his heartbeat quickened with each step. The

hare took off, oblivious to the shooting pain in her leg. She was getting away while she still could.

The red deer knew what to do. He didn't panic. He plodded noisily and heavily along the path, to get the attention of the basset hounds that had been out and about for quite a long time. They noticed him right away. In fact, as he got closer to them, he could see the sad, tired look that flooded their own brown eyes. Savion wondered if the look was there from the time they were young pups. There were seven of them. They looked up at Savion, keeping a few feet away from him as he towered above them.

He was counting on being an impressive sight for the huntsman.

The hunter had a gun in his hands, and he brought it down as he saw Savion approach. He was young too. He was broad-shouldered, and stood straight and tall. His freckled, reddish face and sandy brown hair gave him a friendly disposition. He looked warm and comfortably dressed in a dark green tweed coat, boots, and black cap.

Savion wanted to go just near enough, while keeping his distance so that the huntsman couldn't touch him. It was rare to have a wild red stag come up close, with neither side mistrusting every move and breath of the other's. The man couldn't do anything anyway, apart from send a bullet into him, but Savion doubted that the huntsman would do that. Savion only had to rear up and send his front hooves smashing into the man's chest or spine. He had no plans on doing that either. He would only bring trouble for all the other deer in the area.

He managed to get his way with the hounds too.

"Greetings," he'd said to them, with a formal bow of his head. They had taken an immediate liking to him, and ambled along the ground next to him, docile. With them, Savion paced round the huntsman, stopping to explore the grass and dried out pieces of shrubbery on the field from time to time.

I hope she made it, I hope she made it, Savion thought of the hare.

The huntsman placed a hand on his hip, the one that wasn't holding the gun. He squinted in the daylight, even in the shade provided by the flap of his cap, to gaze at the red beauty. He looked around in the distance—searching for the

elusive hare perhaps, or for any other deer that could be around. From the way he remained still and the way he was looking on him, Savion knew it was the man's first time being so near a wild stag before. He wondered how it must feel like for the hunter. The first time Savion had witnessed a human was during the first hare hunting season. It had been a stocky man with a grey moustache and a barrel for a paunch. He had heard the man chortle when the hounds ripped apart the first hare they had drawn. After that, he didn't go near people as much as he could help it, apart from children and women when they were alone. They tended to be gentler.

The young hunter decided to sit down—a good sign. A breeze was stirring the air and the little bits of vegetation in the field. He took his cap off, still looking at the red deer. Two of the dogs went up to the man; he stroked them behind the ears as they circled round him. The man had a calm air about him. He hadn't frowned or furrowed his brows apart from squinting in the sun. The expression on the man's face never changed, but Savion could feel the man forgetting about the hunt for a moment, forgetting why he was out there at midday in the open field. Savion was even considering keeping this up a little more than he intended. He wouldn't have minded staying, if he were sure he wouldn't be harmed or gained control of.

He sensed something then. Another pack was approaching. He knew from the way the basset hounds started to walk down the field, circling back to the huntsman still, but something else had piqued their interest. He could hear the sounds of the new pack coming too. It was time to go.

Savion wanted to leave the hunter with a sense of wonderment, the awe which took hold of a person deep within. He'd done it a few times and seen its effect. This time would be no exception. Savion humbly went up to the huntsman, and slowly lowered his chin upon the man's shoulder. He was careful not to get his antlers in the way. It did something to people; it melted away all sense of detachment and mindless superiority. Savion's duty was done.

Savion turned and broke off in full speed towards and into the forest again, his red coat a glistening blaze in the background.

There was a distant rumbling roll of thunder then. If it rained, the hunt would have to come to a halt. It was bad for chasing game and following scent lines.

*

The look in the hare's eyes when he got to the stream was all Savion needed.

He'd see what he could do the next day.

*

The young hunter didn't go out to hunt the following morning.

#

The Stream

Running water captures the senses.

The first thing I heard was a clear stream's song, skimming
over rocks and pebbles for a furlong.

I went to the stream and lowered my palm onto the surface.

I watched the water flow over my hand. It was cooling,
shocking; synergy channeled through my veins.

I caught a fractured glimpse of my reflection, which showed me
all there was.

I lost track of how long I was standing there.

My mind became still. My spirit was calm.

I caught the scent of a new day.

And the dew of dawn upon my tongue.

*~ written on 7th June 2006 [this one's more environmental
than animal-focused, but on the same theme about
respecting nature I guess :)]*

The Umbrella

Note: *Written sometime in 2006, on a tiny piece of paper measuring 2cm x 4cm | written in 2 minutes | 100 words*

This is the story of an old, tattered umbrella that got thrown away:

Its black waterproof fabric has completely faded to a colorless shade, and it drifts from a canal to the sea in between the high and low tides.

It is a pathetic sight. Its canopy flutters weakly in the moving air as and when the wind decides to blow.

The birds don't seem to mind though. The umbrella is a little scoop of a playground for their young fledglings to prance and patter safely about in.

So the old umbrella didn't have so bad an end at all.

=====

~ Short story behind the short story:

I thought I lost the piece of paper forever, but my awesome hairstylist was sweeping the floor and noticed the paper on the floor (apparently it had dropped out of my bag/notebook). He and his staff read the thing, and they kept it for me and gave it back to me on my next visit.

Black-Naped Oriole



Black-Naped Oriole | [Wikipedia](#)

#

This was written when I turned 15.

I was living in a high-rise building in Singapore at the time (on the 10th floor). Bird-watching was one of my favourite activities (still is).

Black-Naped Oriole

I haven't seen you for ages
What happened to ya?
Where've you been?
You used to light up my life
Brighten up my day
And nourish up my soul
So ever since you left
I've been in a deep black hole
Seeing how screwed up the world is
Seeing how messed up everyone is
And how people can run so fast
When they need help from me quick

And how people can run so fast
When you need help from them quick
But it's all just an illusion
I don't really need help
I'm just contented being by myself
So now it's just you and me again
And we can have our own little space
Where no one can intrude
And I will just enjoy your company.

~ 29th October 2001

#

Unicorn Haiku



Unicorn Haiku

the unicorn drinks
when hounds come near—in a flash
she's gone—water's still

~ originally published @ [Mirror Dance](#).

#

Cat Karma

A 55-word vignette I might further develop in future.

* * *

“I’m always dreaming of my cat.”

“What about?”

“Don’t know—but she’s always there!”

The owner patted her sleeping feline, unaware the calico cat was listening to the conversation.

I protect your soul at night from the dark shadows’ dangers and secrets, the cat remarked. You do give me food, shelter, and attention after all.

#

The Edge

A 55-word exercise based on a [true story](#).

* * *

“Stop the train!”

The young expat was frantic—her pet dog was trapped along the edge of the railroad tracks. They were in a new, unfamiliar country and still adjusting to the environment.

The dog whimpered, crying for help.

“I’m here.” She hugged her dog, both clinging on to each other.

The train didn’t stop.

#

Also based on a [true story](#).

Hachiko

In 1924, Professor Ueno took in a new pet.

“I’ll name you ‘Hachiko’,” said the professor to the golden brown Akita. “Hachiko, meaning ‘The Eighth Prince’.”

Hachiko promised to greet the professor at the end of each day at Shibuya Station.

The dog was always the first to greet Ueno after a long hard day at work.

But Professor Ueno did not return on a fateful day, a year later.

Never mind, said Hachiko. I’ll wait until my master comes home. Seasons come and go, but I will stay.

The cold, rain and heat did return, time and again, but Hachiko never strayed. Hachiko appeared each day precisely when the train was due at the station.

“Professor Ueno suffered a cerebral hemorrhage,” the people at Shibuya Station would whisper. “He’s never returning.”

Days became weeks and months, till ten years had passed.

Never mind, said Hachiko each day. Here I wait, for my friend who’s late. I will stay, just to walk beside you for one more day.

The dog watched the commuters coming into the station in all directions, as he sat and waited.

Many of the people who frequented the train station had seen Hachiko and Professor Ueno together. They left Hachiko treats and food to nourish him during his wait.

Doors opened and slammed shut

As Hachiko braved all four seasons

Till the doors slammed shut one final time—

God Save His Soul, said the gathered crowd, as

Hachiko lay dying,

Lying on a street in Shibuya

Just as

Hachiko said:

Professor Ueno! I’ve been waiting forever!

Taking his last breath on earth

Before running into the outstretched arms of his master's
spirit
Accompanying his master home once again
This time in the Afterlife

#

Father Bear & Baby Bear

A 55-word exercise.

* * *

“Congratulations on your first kill, son!”

Junior proudly held up the fresh kill he’d made, as blood seeped into and soaked the ground below.

Junior finally felt like he was somebody ready to face the world—he had a human head to mount on his wall now.

“Your mother will be so proud of you.”

#

Skins

Skins features “Laer,” the dark elf antagonist from [The Darker Side of Life](#) (the second instalment in my Cyberpunk Elven Trilogy). Hence, there’s a little bit of dark fantasy thrown into this story.

This is an incident that occurred in his younger days...

P.S. The interior décor in this story is all real.

* * *

“Welcome to Paradise!” Aleksandra Nikolic sailed into the main sitting room of the \$30-million yacht she and her husband had recently purchased.

Really? 15-year old Laer looked around at one of the dwellings his good friend’s relatives called “home.”

“Nice crib, huh,” Stefan murmured.

“Don’t speak that way,” Aleksandra said sharply. She turned around, striking a pose in her impeccable Carolina Herrera gown. “You don’t come from the ghetto.”

Stefan didn’t argue with his step aunt.

Laer nervously ran a hand through his spiky hair. He wasn’t quite sure how to politely put across that the lavishness was quite, quite suffocating.

The two teenage boys stayed close to each other, seeking comfort in each other’s presence. Both of them had come from backgrounds that were vastly different from the world of the super-rich.

Aleksandra’s husband, Andre, gave a quick nod and smile to the boys as he continued chatting over the phone with one of his lawyers. Customs officials had just seized several trophies made from the skins of endangered animals from the couple’s Miami beachfront estate. The discovery of the exotic skins had resulted in a \$30,000 fine, a fee which his lawyer was working on reducing.

The yacht, named the *Mystère*, also contained a host of similar trophies.

Aleksandra trotted out statistics like a shopping list, running through the various materials on the walls and floors as they along. “That’s bamboo, that’s oak, that’s eucalyptus, that’s crocodile...”

Laer was getting giddy from the zig-zag pattern of zebra-skinned beddings. There was a jaguar skin rug, complete with the head, open mouth crying out in perpetual silent pain. The tiger and lion heads on one side of the wall eyed the *Mystère’s* guests too, with their cold lifeless eyes forever frozen in time.

Laer leaned against the dining table for some balance when he saw a cigarette holder made from python skin, next to a cigar box wrapped in elephant hide.

“Andre is spending \$10 million on a gallery for his world-class collection of ivory,” Stefan had mentioned to Laer earlier that week.

Laer had heard of the Nikolics’s taste for collecting exotic animal skin clothing and furniture, though he questioned whether Stefan had been telling the truth or grossly exaggerating. It was nauseating to discover that Stefan had not embellished any facts at all.

“Andre had a strong idea of creating something... modern,” Aleksandra explained to the boys. “He said he wanted both details and clean lines. It’s genius.”

She put a hand out to the walls of one room, which were covered in ghostly white stingray hides, while the walls in the next room were covered in hand-stitched calf’s leather.

The main deck featured two Michel Haillard chairs made from alligator hides and sienna-hued horns from a deer-like animal called the kudu.

“I love beauty,” Aleksandra yattered on, “and I don’t understand ugliness in fashion, so I admire all the people who are making this world more beautiful.”

“Beautiful,” Laer repeated absent-mindedly, taking in the gruesome décor. *Please explain, how spilling the blood of animals for vanity is beautiful?*

Aleksandra took the indifferent silence that chilled his heart as speechless admiration.

When no one was looking, Laer tested if his magic could work on the high seas by conjuring a basic flame spell in the palm of his hand. The pale blue flame lit up in his hand without any trouble.

Laer's boyish good looks contradicted the seething rage hidden below the surface.

Amidst all the carnage he had thus witnessed in what the Nikolics termed "luxurious details," he knew which one made the biggest impression on him. It was the exotic Michel Haillard horned chairs covered in crocodile skin with the tails that slunk out onto the floor, like the distended tongues often seen in persons hanged on the gallows.



[“Furniture by Michel Haillard” | [Grand Home Design](#)]

“While most mega-yachts are ‘vulgar’ statements of wealth and power, the interior design of the *Mystère* was designed to be in harmony with the sea and nature,” Aleksandra went on. “This boat has elegance and intelligence. It is not trying to show the money.”

Laer's attention was fixed on the crocodile-skinned chairs. He thought he saw one part of the chair rear back and take the form of the crocodile's head, as he heard the screams and cries of the animal as it was bludgeoned and skinned alive. The animal's eyes were glistening.

The vivid image played out in Laer's mind. *No faking it. Those crocodile tears are real.*

“Do you like animals?” Aleksandra asked. She admired the trophies on the wall when her teenage guests didn't answer. “I do—nothing screams wild and luxe like exotic animal hides.”

Laer was close to throwing up, and it wasn't because of the ocean waves.

“It's...a...abuse,” he managed to stammer.

Aleksandra tossed her golden honey blonde hair back and tilted her chin up slightly, observing Laer from the tip of her nose. She gave a little shrug and a cold smile. “It isn’t animal abuse if the animal is dead.”

But that isn’t the case. A blinding anguish scorched Laer’s mind and seared his soul. *You bloody well know it!*

“I have a true passion for exotic-skin footwear and fashion accessories.” Aleksandra was proud of her fashion sense, as proud as she was of the floating paradise she and her husband loved to show off and throw parties on. “I love alligator and crocodile shoes and boots, belts, and wallets, as well as luggage, bags and furniture. Eel-skin is nice, ostrich as well, and stingray, sure...but my favorite is real, proper, sea turtle skin. My custom boots made of sea turtle belly hide—with a lambskin lining for summer and detachable mink lining for winter—is one of the crown jewels in my footwear collection. I can show it to you later.”

Aleksandra had a look her perfectly pedicured feet, before adding, “The bar lounge in the *Mystère*—bar stools, tables and lounge furniture—is upholstered entirely of alligator belly skin. I was included in every step of the design!”

A brilliant idea struck Aleksandra just then. She made a mental note to create bar stools covered in whale foreskin. She thought it’d be a good way to shock future guests.

Laer was thinking of setting off a round of explosives in the expensive yacht, but he realized it wasn’t the best move. It was too guerrilla, and wouldn’t humiliate or shame the Nikolics. He had to make a more sophisticated statement, to be taken a little more seriously by haute couture devotees who reveled in cold-blooded vanities to pass their time.

Arguing and activism didn’t interest Laer. He was clearly picturing a better way to make a statement. The energy he felt gathering within himself came as a surprise, like he was gaining a sense of some kind of new purpose in life.

“Sorry,” Laer whispered to Stefan from the back. “But I have to do what I have to do.”

He stood behind the unsuspecting Stefan, covering his friend’s eyes with his hands. “*Lanta kaima’lova handasse.*” The spell would keep Laer’s human friend asleep and unconscious for the next hour.

“Where’s Stefan?” Aleksandra called out, just as Laer turned around to face her with his piercing green eyes.

“*Va, vine, viata,*” he murmured, waving his hand toward the stunning silver snake arm band Aleksandra was wearing.

“Is Stefan all right?” Aleksandra inquired. The Elven words Laer was muttering were gibberish to her ears.

A chill ran through her lithe frame when she saw the absolute lack of any human warmth in Laer’s striking gaze.

“Wh—”

She gave a bloodcurdling shriek as her hand went to her throat.

Laer stood still and watched as her eyes began to roll back—she was lying on the ground, convulsing, immobile after her snake arm band had come to life and slithered up her arm to bite her on the neck. Her blood was now poisoned and saturated with pure, undiluted mercury.

“I—” was all Andre managed to utter when he stepped into the room.

Laer waved his hand to the billionaire, who collapsed onto the ground alongside his former Yugoslavian pop-star wife once the silver snake had punctured his jugular vein too.

“*Neuma en’ templa,*” Laer chanted, to trap the 30-strong crew onboard in a sleep spell as well.

He had to work fast—he was simply not yet strong enough as a dark arts practitioner to keep a large group of people unconscious for an extended amount of time.

“*Lietha guldur!*” He dispelled the charm on the silver arm band. With a metallic clink, the snake band returned to its original form and stayed on the ground, unmoving, as Laer went forward to pick it up.

Once he’d disrupted the power grid of the yacht’s integrated surveillance system, Laer whistled as he worked, dreaming of skinning the Nikolics like how an animal was skinned, unfazed by the quick, unmessy murders he’d just committed.

“After all, it’s not abuse if the animal is dead...” he muttered over the Nikolics’s corpses.

But it was tricky to skin a human body. He didn’t have the time or knowledge to drain all the blood without making a big mess. He also didn’t know if he could undo any mistakes he might make, especially if it involved the removal of the head.

The young dark elf chose to strip and drag the bodies out instead, placing them on the grotesque Michel Haillard

horned chairs covered in crocodile skin, with the tails that slunk out onto the floor.

The Nikolics's stark nude bodies were displayed in the same fashion as the chairs, with their arms and legs resting on and splayed out the exact same way that the horns and tails on the chairs curled up and out.

"Two for the win." Laer stood back, re-positioning the bodies a couple of times, admiring his precise handiwork, when he decided to add a few more things.

"*Skalle*," he said, conjuring up two blood-spattered human skulls.

He placed one skull below the tiger and lion heads hanging on the wall—one human skull for each animal head—before having another flash of inspiration.

"*Sk'aal'burdur*," he said as he snapped his fingers at the animal heads on the wall, replacing them with real-life replicas of the heads of the Nikolics.

"*Skål*," Laer chuckled, enjoying the word play, holding one hand up like he was holding a wine glass. A *Skål* was a Scandinavian toast of friendship usually offered when drinking, as a casual toast. He toasted the moment to his first kills as a dark elf. It'd been worth it, and something to brag about if he ever felt like it.

Laer grabbed Aleksandra's snake arm band, taking it as his trophy and souvenir, and as his future weapon of choice.

A thin smile appeared on Laer's face as he looked upon the scene of his slaughter. Suddenly, the croc skins seemed to be shining even brighter than they had before. With each passing second, they were looking more and more alive under the pallid remains of Mr. and Mrs. Nikolic.

One more finishing touch, he said to himself.

He went over to their laptop, ran a quick search on how the fur trade worked, and printed out the paragraph:

"Fur items come from animals who spend their short, miserable lives in cramped, filthy cages until they are slaughtered, or they are trapped and beaten to death in the wild. Fur farmers and trappers often use the cheapest and cruelest killing methods available, including suffocation, electrocution, gassing, bludgeoning, drowning, and poisoning. Many animals are still alive and

able to feel pain when workers begin to rip the skin off their bodies.”

Laer signed the paper off with “We (The Dead Animals) Are Watching You,” to infer to the authorities that it was the dead skins that had come to life and taken their revenge on the hard-partying socialites.

After scribbling one final thought that summed up his entire feelings on the exotic skins trade, Laer tacked the piece of paper onto the side of Aleksandra’s death-trapped face. He thought it was fitting that she had died with her mouth open, akin to the head of the jaguar rug on obscene display in the middle of the room.

He carried the still-asleep Stefan over his shoulder and vacated the scene, getting into one of the Hov Pods stored aboard in the side tender garage of the *Mystère*. He had just enough manna left in him for the day to accelerate the motor and head back to shore, somewhere faraway from the luxury yacht and scene of the crime.

As he felt the delightfully warm sun and fresh breeze on his face, Laer thought of the line he’d written down at the last minute, in his small, neat handwriting:

We should all learn to feel comfortable in our own skins.

#

[NOTE: PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)]

I'm not associated with PETA.

However I believe consumers should be “kept informed” on the details of the cold-blooded cruelty of the exotic-skins trade.

*For more information, please visit
<http://www.peta.org/action/activism-guide/default.aspx>*

*The following is an excerpt from PETA’s campaign:
[“Ask Hermes to Stop Killing Animals for Cold-Blooded Vanity”](#)*



[“Famed actor Joaquin Phoenix for PETA”]

High-end fashion house Hermès continues to use exotic-animal skins in its designs, despite the cruelty and suffering that alligators, crocodiles, lizards, and snakes must endure in order for the company to produce a single shoe or bag.

Millions of reptiles are slaughtered each year so that their skins can be turned into accessories. Animals used for their skins are often skinned alive or bludgeoned to death with blunt objects. Animal welfare is simply not a consideration for those who hunt, poach, and factory-farm these animals.

Famed actor Joaquin Phoenix exposes the cold-blooded cruelty of the exotic-skins trade in a new PETA video. In the video footage, live snakes are nailed to trees by their heads,

and alligators are bludgeoned with metal bats before their skin is torn off their bodies.

Nike, H&M, and Overstock.com have already agreed not to sell exotic-animal skins. With so many stylish and cruelty-free alternatives available, such as fake snake and mock croc, there's no excuse for using animal skins.

Please take a moment to tell Hermès that if the company really wants to be a leader in the fashion industry, it should stop killing animals for cold-blooded vanity.

-- [PETA](#)

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[AUTHOR Q&A]

The following interview extract was originally published on 15 August 2011, courtesy of [Word Riot](#).



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Q: What projects are you currently working on?

Jess: I'm currently working on a trilogy featuring cyberpunk elves). On the whole, jessINK (my indie publishing platform) is the biggest project I'm constantly working on!

Q: When and why did you begin writing?

Jess: I've always been writing. I think I've just always enjoyed being able to channel my thoughts and imagination into a creative/analytical pursuit, which happens to be the written word. If it wasn't writing, it'd be via music or visual art, or maybe photography, or fashion design, or...

Q: When did you first consider yourself a writer?

Jess: When I was fifteen going on sixteen, and wrote a poem titled "Disillusioned...Misguided." A couple of friends read it and wondered if I was suicidal. I'd achieved embodying the role of "a suitably depressed poet," which a core part of me considered an accomplishment.

Q: What inspired you to write your first book?

Jess: My first book (*EyeLeash*) was a realistic teenage sexting novel, written entirely in a blog/IM format. I guess I wanted it to be an antithesis to the mass media's portrayal of

sex as a commodity. I also wanted to give people a real and genuine glimpse at the inner workings of a non-trivial relationship (where there's more than how "physically desirable" one is/appears to be, on the surface).

Q: Who or what has influenced your writing?

Jess: Everything and everybody I've ever seen, heard, imagined, or come into contact with. Music is a particularly heavy influence—I listen to everything from classical, rock, electronica, Korean Pop. It's all in the vibes and whatever moves the soul and colors the mind.

Q: How has your environment/upbringing colored your writing?

Jess: I grew up in cosmopolitan Singapore and came over to rural Maine when I turned 21. My writing has always been a curiously quite-balanced blend of fact and fiction.

International settings and a spirit of self-discovery are elements that feature quite frequently in my work.

Q: What genre are you most comfortable writing?

Jess: I write in a range of different genres (creative non-fiction, erotic fiction, experimental fiction, alternative paranormal romance, poetry, urban fantasy, cyberpunk). I like what each genre has to offer, though I'm usually more concerned with the storyline and characters.

Q: Is there a message in your work that you want readers to grasp?

Jess: The basic message is always the same: to be unafraid to be one's true self.

Q: Any memories of particular works: the writing of, feedback, the thought behind...etc.

Jess: *Jack in the Box* (one of my erotic/literary novelettes branded as "factual fiction") is close to 100% factual.

Which brings to mind an Oscar Wilde quote: “To reveal art
and conceal the artist is art’s aim.”

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About the author:

Jess is an author/artist/non-conformist, and an English/Business graduate of Adams State College.

About *Skins*, she says, “I always enjoyed writing about animals and nature as a kid. I hope to develop future projects with regards to certain (uncivilized and) pressing themes (such as poaching, pollution, etc.), in a more mature and sophisticated way than my early pre-teen work (though the passion for writing about these themes is as strong as ever—if not stronger than before).”

Jess is currently completing her cyberpunk elven trilogy. She enjoys the speed and efficiency of indie publishing, and thanks you for your support of indie authors.

Other titles by Jess C Scott:

EyeLeash: A Blog Novel (teenage memoir/sexting)
Porcelain (portfolio of written + illustrative work)

1: The Intern (Book 1 [Lust] in the Sins07 Series)

Fashion Icon (special edition)

4:Play (anthology)

AFF (Asian Factual Fiction)

Primal Scream (anthology)

The Devilin Fey | SVEN | Kylie (Naked Heat anthology)

The Other Side of Life

(cyberpunk elves trilogy; 2012)

London Underground Trilogy

(urban fantasy / dragon series; 2012)

And more on jessINK.

Connect with Jess Online:

Website: <http://www.jessINK.com>

Facebook: <http://facebook.com/jessINKbooks>

Twitter: <http://twitter.com/jesscscott>

E-mail: missfey@gmail.com

If you enjoyed this...

Please tell two friends who you think might enjoy it too :)

Thanks!

P.S. And feel free to let me know your comments/suggestions
via email.

missfey@gmail.com

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